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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#) [GLOBAL](#) [DEFENSE](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ/ITALY- ITALIAN POLITICAL DIRECTOR ON PLANS
FOR IRAQ NATO PROTECTION FORCE, IRAQ CONFERENCE, ENGAGEMENT
WITH IRAN

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN, REASONS 1.4
B AND D.

Summary

1. (C) At their Oct. 6 meeting with Italian MFA DG Massolo, A/S Bloomfield and DASD Hoehn discussed Iran and Iraq, as well as Global Defense Posture Review (GDPR) issues (septel). Massolo underscored Italy's concern with Iranian nuclear ambitions. He sought details on the mix of MNF and Iraqi forces that would be used to bring order to restive areas of Iraq prior to elections, asked whether the NATO Iraq mission's protection force would be drawn from MNF already in country, and proposed establishing a steering group to help plan next month's international conference on Iraq and manage follow-up. End Summary.

Iran - Italy Supports Engagement with Tough Messages

2. (C) On October 6, PM Assistant Secretary Lincoln Bloomfield Jr. and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Andrew Hoehn met with Italian MFA Director General for Multilateral and Political Affairs Giampiero Massolo to discuss GDPR issues (septel). Massolo also wanted to discuss Iran and Iraq. He stated that Italy was committed to engagement with Iran, allowing for firm messages to be passed on issues of concern, principally nuclear ones, but also on involvement in the affairs of neighboring states and on human rights. He said Italy was keenly aware of the unhelpful undercurrents in Iranian policy and agreed with the U.S. on the seriousness of a potential nuclear breakout by Iran. A/S Bloomfield noted that Undersecretary Bolton had the lead for the Department on the Iran nuclear issue, pointed out that the U.S. has for years held open the possibility of dialogue with Iran, and stressed the seriousness with which the U.S. views Iranian nuclear policy, human rights performance, meddling in the affairs of its neighbors, and support for terrorism. Bloomfield pointed out that even with those concerns, we would be sitting at the same table as the Iranians at the international conference on Iraq in Egypt in November. Massolo and Bloomfield agreed that the challenge was to be firm on Iran's bad behavior while holding out the prospect of Iran gaining acceptance in the future as an important regional state if it overcame these concerns.

Iraq - Election Prep and Right Mix of Forces

3. (C) Turning to Iraq, Massolo observed that preparing for January elections and the realization of UNSCR 1546 would require the return of the UN to Iraq and an effort to bring relative stability to areas that are now "out of control." He wondered what the U.S. considered the right combination of MNF and Iraqi forces to do so and asked if the U.S. was committed to the current timetable. Massolo said that the stronger the Iraqi ownership of actions taken, the more enduring their impact would be. A/S Bloomfield briefed on latest developments in UN protection force commitments and noted that the U.S. saw two pillars for improvement of the situation: a political track that would defeat the aim of the insurgents by establishing a legitimate elected Iraqi government; and building sufficient capability in the indigenous Iraqi security sector. He also briefed on PM Allawi's statements during his U.S. visit about recent and current operations by MNF and Iraqi forces in key Sunni cities. He noted that the U.S. was mindful of the same questions Massolo had posed and was thinking along the same lines.

4. (C) On the NATO Iraq mission, Massolo said Italy was keen to have NATO there, had been active in the NATO debate and in assisting NATO planners, but was puzzled by the large size of the projected protection force for the NATO trainers. He asked if that force would be drawn from MNF troops already in Iraq or if the thinking was to seek supplemental forces, a task he said would require huge effort. A/S Bloomfield said he would check with Washington to get an answer.

15. (C) Moving to the upcoming international conference on Iraq, Massolo said Italy wanted it to concentrate on a focused agenda, including support for the political calendar. The public message should be about bringing stability as quickly as possible. The conference should not re-open a legitimacy debate about the war. Massolo proposed that an informal steering group, somewhat like the Contact Group for Kosovo, be formed to prepare the conference along such lines and to be responsible for any necessary follow-up. He believed such a body could establish a broad pattern of cooperation. Massolo added that the Iraqis must be included in any such effort and suggested that it meet somewhere other than the U.S., at the level of Ambassador or high official. A/S Bloomfield said he would take this proposal back to Washington for consideration. He added that the Iraqis were looking for reaffirmation of international support for such key goals as debt relief and commitment to seeing a free Iraq succeed. He said he appreciated the chance to hear Italian views and encouraged Massolo to continue to engage with the U.S. on these issues.

16. (C) Massolo closed by pointing out that there was a gradual convergence of Italian public opinion of the right and left supporting Italian participation in stabilizing Iraq. While not wholeheartedly shared by all, he said there was a growing public opinion which wanted to see Italian troops there, and support for the presence was increasing in the Italian Parliament. There is not in Italy a pathology about an exit strategy, he said. Massolo said "I can offer a firm and reassuring assessment of continued Italian Parliament must renew Italian troops in Decem" problem."

17. (U) this message.

18. (U) Minimize considered.

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